

**Alaska Judicial Council  
Performance Evaluation for:**

**Judge Leslie N. Dickson  
Anchorage District Court**

The Alaska Judicial Council finds Judge Dickson met or exceeded performance standards, and recommends a **“YES”** vote for another term in office

Judge Dickson was appointed to the Anchorage District Court in November of 2012. This is her second retention evaluation. Judge Dickson handles both civil and criminal cases.

**Performance Summary:**

After conducting its performance review, the Judicial Council determined that Judge Dickson met or exceeded performance standards on all criteria, including legal ability, integrity, impartiality/fairness, temperament, diligence, and administrative skills.

The Council also determined that Judge Dickson met or exceeded educational requirements set by the Alaska Supreme Court.

Because Judge Dickson met or exceeded all performance and professional development standards, the Alaska Judicial Council recommends a “yes” vote on retention in office.

**Performance Findings:**

The Council conducts a thorough performance review of each judge standing for retention. Key findings for Judge Dickson include:

- **Ratings by justice system professionals:** Attorneys and law enforcement officers who appeared before Judge Dickson gave her very good reviews, as did court employees.
- **Ratings by jurors:** Jurors who served in trials before Judge Dickson during 2018 and 2019 rated her 4.8 overall on a five-point scale. One juror commented, “The courts need more judges like her. I am so impressed and proud to have seen her at work. Our people have a fair chance with her presiding as a judge. Thank you for her service.”
- **Professional activities:** The Council’s review of Judge Dickson’s professional activities showed significant contributions to her community and to the administration of justice. Judge Dickson was a Training Judge for magistrate judges, and she served as a mentor to a newer judge. Judge Dickson participated in the “Success Inside and Out” conference for inmates at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center, served as a Youth Court judge, and conducted tours of the courthouse for school children.

- **Other performance indicators:** The Council's review of other performance indicators, including Judge Dickson's financial and conflict of interest statements, disqualifications from cases, and appellate reversal rates, raised no performance concerns.
- **Timeliness:** Alaska law requires judges' pay be withheld if a decision is pending longer than six months. The Council verified that Judge Dickson was paid on schedule, and she certified that she had no untimely decisions.
- **Ethics:** There were no public disciplinary proceedings against Judge Dickson, and the Council's review found no ethical concerns.

### **Documents:**

- [Judge Dickson's Judge Questionnaire](#)
- [Judge Dickson's Attorney Survey Ratings](#)
- [Judge Dickson's Peace and Probation Officer Survey Ratings](#)
- [Judge Dickson's Court Employee Survey Ratings](#)
- [Juror Survey Memo](#)
- [Peremptory Challenges Memo](#)
- [Recusal Records Memo](#)
- [Appellate Evaluation Memo](#)



Print Questionnaire

# alaska judicial council

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## Alaska Judicial Council Trial Judge Questionnaire

### 2020 Candidates for Judicial Retention

November 2019

Leslie Dickson

Name

Anchorage District Court

Court

1. Please estimate your workload during your present term.

a) 20 % civil cases

75 % criminal cases

5 % court administrative work

100 % Total

b) 10 # of jury trials/year

8 # of non-jury trials/year

0 # of administrative appeals/year

Small claims trials are not included here, as the court system does not track them. I would estimate I do approximately 25 of those every year.

2. Please describe your participation on court/bar committees or other administrative activities during your current term of office.

Anchorage Association of Women Lawyers  
Anchorage Bar Association  
Magistrate Training Judge (trained three magistrates since 2016)  
Mentor Judge  
Juror Welcomes

3. Please describe any judicial or legal education you have undertaken or provided during your current term in office.

Judicial Conferences; 2016-2019  
National Judicial College, Domestic Violence training; 4/1-4/4/2019  
National Judicial College, Drugs in America Today - What Every Judge Needs to Know; 5/17-5/19/2017  
NHTSA Impaired Driving Assessment Screening Tools Webcast; 4/18/2017  
A Conversation with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor; 8/22/2016  
Taught trial course for Seattle University School of Law; 2017  
Barriers to the Bench panel with three other female judges moderated by Justice Fabe; 2018

4. Please describe any public outreach activities.

Success Inside and Out, Hiland Mountain Correctional Center; 2017-2019  
MLK Day volunteer; 2016  
AAWL new lawyers presentation; 2018  
Alaska Summer Trial Volunteer, Summer Trial Institute  
Alaska Youth Court judge; 2016  
Middle school Goldie Locks mock trial; 2017  
School tours of courthouse as requested; supervised a high school student at jail court getting civics credits.  
Juror Welcomes

5. Please assess, in one or two paragraphs, your judicial performance during your present term. Appropriate areas of comment could include: satisfaction with your judicial role, specific contributions to the judiciary or the field of law, increases in legal knowledge and judicial skills, or other measures of judicial abilities that you believe to be important.

A more experienced judge told me it takes three to five years to feel comfortable in the job. He was right. Seven years later, I have adjusted to my role on the bench and really enjoy it. The Anchorage District Court is a high-volume trial court and the ten judges really work as a team with our block calendaring. It can be frustrating as each litigant may only receive a small amount of our time due to heavy calendars, although their issue is important to them and can result in significant consequences in their lives. I believe my compassion, and ability to communicate and listen, assists litigants through what can be a daunting process. Many of our litigants are self-represented and it is important for them to understand what is happening to them. I enjoy meeting the hundreds of jurors who make sacrifices to serve, and am consistently impressed by how hard they work to make decisions on difficult cases.

We have a great team in place and I couldn't be happier with the job, my colleagues and our supportive and excellent court staff. I have acted as a mentor judge for one of our new judges and that has been a fulfilling experience. I still learn new things every week, which makes the job challenging, interesting and fun.

6. During your most recent term as a judge, have you:
- a) had a tax lien filed or other collection procedure instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - b) been involved in a non-judicial capacity in any legal proceeding whether as a party or otherwise? ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - c) engaged in the practice of law (other than as a judge)? ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - d) held office in any political party? ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - e) held any other local, state or federal office? ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - f) had any complaints, charges or grievances filed against you with the Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct, the Alaska Bar Association, the Alaska Court System, or any other agency that resulted in public proceedings or sanctions?  
☐ Yes ☒ No
7. If your answer to any of the questions above is "yes," please give full details, including dates, facts, case numbers and outcomes.

8. Please provide any other information which you believe would assist the Council in conducting its evaluations and in preparing its recommendations for the 2020 retention elections.

I have participated in the Alaska Women's Giving Circle during this term (although not in 2018 due to severe earthquake damage to my house). This group provides grants to non-profit, non-partisan defined projects which assist the community.

I have organized a Peak a Week hiking group that meets every Wednesday through the summer. This year was my 20th year! Anyone is welcome and we routinely adopt young lawyers and law clerks to join us to learn about the outdoors.

My running group sponsors an annual event to provide gift baskets for displaced or homeless women and children experiencing domestic violence.

*For questions 9 - 12, please do not list any cases that have pending issues in your court.*

9. Please list your three most recent jury trials including case names and numbers. Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these trials. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

### Case Number 1

**Case Name:** Municipality of Anchorage

**Case Number:** 3AN-19-01568 CR

**v.** Timothy Lezama

#### Attorneys Involved:

Name: Michael Shaffer

Name: R. James Christie III

Address: 632 W. 6th Ave, Ste 210

Address: 745 W. 4th Ave, Ste 250

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

### Case Number 2

**Case Name:** Municipality of Anchorage

**Case Number:** 3AN-18-05532 CR

**v.** Mutazz Chenery

#### Attorneys Involved:

Name: Monica Elkinton

Name: Lynn Bechtol

Address: 632 W. 6th Ave, Ste 210

Address: 750 W. 2nd Ave, Ste 104

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

### Case Number 3

**Case Name:** Municipality of Anchorage

**Case Number:** 3AN-17-09915 CR

**v.** Saye Gatei

#### Attorneys Involved:

Name: Jennifer Ivers

Name: Igor Herbey

Address: 222 W. 7th Ave, Room 253 #9

Address: 750 W. 2nd Ave, Ste 104

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99513

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

10. Please list your three most recent non-jury trials including case names and numbers. Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these trials. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

**Case Number 1**

**Case Name:** Elaina O'Loughlin **Case Number:** 3AN-17-00209 SC  
**v.** Lucy and Marius Maxwell

**Attorneys Involved:**

Name: <u>Jason Skala</u>	Name: <u>Michael Rose</u>
Address: <u>800 E. Dimond Blvd, Ste 3-305</u>	Address: <u>4300 B St, Ste 206</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99515</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99503</u>
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

**Case Number 2**

**Case Name:** Taree Wood **Case Number:** 3AN-17-06561 CI  
**v.** Sadi Smith

**Attorneys Involved:**

Name: <u>Kimberlee Colbo</u>	Name: <u>Vikram Chaobal</u>
Address: <u>1029 W. 3rd Ave, Ste 110</u>	Address: <u>1841 W. 80th #7</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99502</u>
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

**Case Number 3**

**Case Name:** Municipality of Anchorage **Case Number:** 3AN-14-05551/08861 CR  
**v.** Kurt Sorensen

**Attorneys Involved:**

Name: <u>Michael Shaffer</u>	Name: <u>Richard Payne</u>
Address: <u>632 W. 6th Ave, Ste 210</u>	Address: <u>750 W. 2nd Ave, Ste 104</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____



11. Please list your three most recent cases, including case names and numbers, which did not go to trial, but on which you did significant work (such as settlement conference, hearings, motion work, etc.). Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these cases. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

**Case Number 1****Case Name:** Cedar Crest Condo Assn.**Case Number:** 3AN-16-06198 CI

v. Lenell Cheatham

**Attorneys Involved:**

Name: Todd Timmermans

Name: Hal Gazaway

Address: 1049 W. 5th Ave, Ste 202

Address: 123 E. Fireweed Lane, Ste 215

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99503

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

**Case Number 2****Case Name:** State of Alaska**Case Number:** 3AN-17-02430 CR

v. Jennifer Putnam

**Attorneys Involved:**

Name: John Haley III

Name: Chong Yim

Address: 310 K Street, Suite 520

Address: 900 West 5th Ave, Ste 200

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

**Case Number 3****Case Name:** Julianne Heyes**Case Number:** 3AN-17-10306 CI

v. ACMHS and Dee Foster

**Attorneys Involved:**

Name: Julianne Heyes, pro se

Name: Allen Clendaniel

Address:

Address: 500 L Street, Ste 500

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

12. *Optional:* If you deem it helpful to the Council, please list up to three other cases during your past term in which you believe your work was particularly noteworthy. Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these cases. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

### Case Number 1

**Case Name:** James Kuzma

**Case Number:** 3AN-18-06109 CI

**v.** Municipality of Anchorage

#### Attorneys Involved:

Name: Megan Rowe

Name: Sarah Stanley

Address: 750 W. 2nd Ave, Ste 104

Address: 632 W. 6th Ave, Ste 210

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

City, State, Zip: Anchorage, AK 99501

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

### Case Number 2

**Case Name:**

**Case Number:**

**v.**

#### Attorneys Involved:

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

### Case Number 3

**Case Name:**

**Case Number:**

**v.**

#### Attorneys Involved:

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

City, State, Zip:

**Table 35**  
**Judge Leslie Dickson**  
**Demographic Description of Respondents - Bar Association Members**

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Experience with Judge</b>		
Direct professional experience	141	77.0
Professional reputation	25	13.7
Other personal contacts	17	9.3
<b>Detailed Experience*</b>		
Recent experience (within last 5 years)	118	90.1
Substantial amount of experience	50	36.0
Moderate amount of experience	50	36.0
Limited amount of experience	39	28.1
<b>Type of Practice</b>		
No response	4	2.2
Private, solo	34	18.6
Private, 2-5 attorneys	20	10.9
Private, 6+ attorneys	16	8.7
Private, corporate employee	7	3.8
Judge or judicial officer	30	16.4
Government	51	27.9
Public service agency or organization	5	2.7
Retired	14	7.7
Other	2	1.1
<b>Length of Alaska Practice</b>		
No response	4	2.2
5 years or fewer	16	8.7
6 to 10 years	22	12.0
11 to 15 years	17	9.3
16 to 20 years	29	15.8
More than 20 years	95	51.9
<b>Cases Handled</b>		
No response	4	2.2
Prosecution	16	8.7
Criminal	22	12.0
Mixed criminal & civil	66	36.1
Civil	63	34.4
Other	12	6.6
<b>Location of Practice</b>		
No response	3	1.6
First District	3	1.6
Second District	1	0.5
Third District	156	85.2
Fourth District	15	8.2
Outside Alaska	5	2.7
<b>Gender</b>		
No response	6	3.3
Male	114	62.3
Female	63	34.4

\*Only among those respondents reporting direct professional experience with the judge.

**Table 36**  
**Judge Leslie Dickson**  
**Detailed Responses - Bar Association Members**

		Legal Ability	Impartiality/ Fairness	Integrity	Judicial Temperament	Diligence	Overall
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
All respondents	183	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.5
<b>Basis for Evaluation</b>							
<b>Direct professional experience</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Experience within last 5 years	118	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.5
Experience not within last 5 years	13	4.3	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.5
Substantial amount of experience	50	4.3	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.5
Moderate amount of experience	50	4.2	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.3
Limited amount of experience	39	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.5
Professional reputation	25	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7
Other personal contacts	17	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.5
<b>Type of Practice*</b>							
Private, solo	28	4.3	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.5	4.7
Private, 2-5 attorneys	18	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.2
Private, 6+ attorneys	10	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.4	4.5
Private, corporate employee	2	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Judge or judicial officer	26	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.6
Government	38	4.2	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.2
Public service agency or organization	4	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.8
Retired	10	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6
Other	2	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
<b>Length of Alaska Practice*</b>							
5 years or fewer	14	4.1	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.3
6 to 10 years	21	4.0	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.2
11 to 15 years	14	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.3
16 to 20 years	18	4.4	4.3	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.6
More than 20 years	72	4.3	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.5
<b>Cases Handled*</b>							
Prosecution	14	3.7	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.1	3.8
Criminal	18	4.3	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.3
Mixed criminal & civil	58	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.5
Civil	43	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.6
Other	5	4.8	4.6	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
<b>Location of Practice*</b>							
First District	1	4.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	3.0	3.0
Second District	1	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Third District	127	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.4
Fourth District	8	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5
Outside Alaska	2	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
<b>Gender*</b>							
Male	97	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.4
Female	40	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.6

\*Ratings from only those respondents reporting direct professional experience with the judge.

**Table 20:**  
**Judge Leslie Dickson**  
**Description of Respondents' Experiences - Peace and Probation Officers**

	<i>n</i>	%
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Experience with Judge</b>		
Direct professional experience	28	93.3
Professional reputation	2	6.7
Other personal contacts	-	-
<b>Detailed Experience*</b>		
Recent experience (within last 5 years)	27	100.0
Substantial amount of experience	3	10.7
Moderate amount of experience	16	57.1
Limited amount of experience	9	32.1

\*Only among those respondents reporting direct professional experience with the judge.

**Table 21:**  
**Judge Leslie Dickson**  
**Detailed Responses - Peace and Probation Officers**

		<b>Impartiality/ Fairness</b>	<b>Integrity</b>	<b>Judicial Temperament</b>	<b>Diligence</b>	<b>Overall</b>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
All respondents	30	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.5
<b>Basis for Evaluation</b>						
<b>Direct professional experience</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.5</b>
Experience within last 5 years	27	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.5
Experience not within last 5 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
Substantial amount of experience	3	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Moderate amount of experience	16	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.6
Limited amount of experience	9	4.0	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.2
Professional reputation	2	4.5	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0
Other personal contacts	-	-	-	-	-	-

\*Ratings from only those respondents reporting direct professional experience with the judge.

**Table 29**  
**Judge Leslie Dickson**  
**Description of Respondents' Experience - Court Employees**

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Experience with Judge</b>		
Direct professional experience	18	75.0
Professional reputation	3	12.5
Other personal contacts	3	12.5
<b>Detailed Experience*</b>		
Recent experience (within last 5 years)	17	100
Substantial amount of experience	6	33.3
Moderate amount of experience	10	55.6
Limited amount of experience	2	11.1

\*Only among those respondents reporting direct professional experience with the judge.

**Table 30**  
**Judge Leslie Dickson**  
**Detailed Responses - Court Employees**

		<b>Impartiality/ Fairness</b>	<b>Integrity</b>	<b>Judicial Temperament</b>	<b>Diligence</b>	<b>Overall</b>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
All respondents	24	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.5
<b>Basis for Evaluation</b>						
<b>Direct professional experience</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Experience within last 5 years	17	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.6
Experience not within last 5 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
Substantial amount of experience	6	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.8
Moderate amount of experience	10	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.4
Limited amount of experience	2	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.5
Professional reputation	3	4.3	4.3	4.7	4.3	4.3
Other personal contacts	3	4.7	4.3	4.7	4.3	4.7



# alaska judicial council

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Judicial Council  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** March 17, 2020  
**RE:** Juror Survey Report

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The Alaska Judicial Council surveyed all jurors who sat in trials during 2018 and 2019. The jurors sat before all of the 20 trial court judges eligible to stand for retention in 2020. A total of 754 jurors responded on Council-provided postcards that judges distributed to jurors at the end of each trial (see attached Juror Survey Card Example). Jurors completed the surveys on the postage-paid cards and mailed them to the Council.

Council staff entered the data from the surveys and ran basic descriptive statistics. This memorandum summarizes the findings. It is distributed to Council members and judges, and posted on the Council's website.

Table 1 shows the distribution of jurors by type of trial reported for each judge. Some jurors only wrote comments and did not rate the judge on the specific variables. Thus, there may be more respondents shown on Table 1 than appear on the judges' individual tables.

<b>Table 1:</b> <b>Distribution of Jurors by Type of Trial, by Judge</b> Alaska Judicial Council 2020 Retention Juror Survey				
<b>Judge</b>	<b>Civil</b>	<b>Criminal</b>	<b>No Answer</b>	<b>Total</b>
Christian, Matthew	0	34	0	34
Crosby, Dani	19	0	1	20
DiBenedetto, Romano D.	0	26	2	28
Dickson, Leslie N.	3	72	5	80
Franciosi, Michael	1	46	1	48
Guidi, Andrew	25	29	7	61
Hanley, J. Patrick	4	38	5	47
Henderson, Jennifer	29	3	0	32
Lamoureux, Yvonne	15	12	0	27
Logue, Michael	0	30	1	31
McCrea, Kari	0	28	3	31
Miller, Gregory	1	0	0	1
Montgomery, Will	3	64	14	81
Peters, Nathaniel	1	21	12	34
Reigh, Christina	0	43	3	46
Roetman, Paul A.	4	5	0	9
Wallace, David	1	35	2	38
Washington, Pamela S.	1	37	3	41
Wells, Jennifer	0	39	9	48
Woodman, Jonathan	0	16	1	17



Table 2 shows the distribution of number of days served, as reported by the jurors. Seventy-three percent of the jurors served fewer than five days.

<b>Table 2:</b> <b>Distribution of Days Served</b> Alaska Judicial Council 2020 Retention Juror Survey		
<b>Number of Days Served</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
1 - 2 Days	20	152
3 - 4 Days	53	397
5 - 7 Days	15	114
8 - 10 Days	6	46
11 - 20 Days	2	11
21 or More Days	0	1
No Answer	4	33
Total		754

## Individual Results

Table 3 shows each judge's mean rating for each question on the survey. Each judge's individual survey results are provided in separate tables. Jurors used a five-point scale, with ***excellent rated as five, and poor rated as one***. The closer the jurors' ratings were to five, the higher that judge's evaluation by the jurors. The last column shows the total number of jurors who evaluated the judge on at least one variable.

**Table 3:**  
**Mean Rating for each Variable and for "Overall Performance," by Judge**  
 Alaska Judicial Council  
 2020 Retention Juror Survey

	Impartiality and Fairness	Respectful and Courteous	Attentive During Proceedings	Control During Proceedings	Intelligence and Skill as a Judge	Overall Mean	Total Count
Christian, Matthew	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.9	34
Crosby, Dani	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	20
DiBenedetto, Romano D.	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.8	28
Dickson, Leslie N.	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.8	80
Franciosi, Michael	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.0	48
Guidi, Andrew	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	61
Hanley, J. Patrick	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	47
Henderson, Jennifer	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	32
Lamoureux, Yvonne	4.8	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.0	27
Logue, Michael	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.9	31
McCrea, Kari	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.8	31
Miller, Gregory	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	1
Montgomery, Will	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.6	81
Peters, Nathaniel	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5	34
Reigh, Christina	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.7	46
Roetman, Paul A.	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.8	9
Wallace, David	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	38
Washington, Pamela S.	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9	41
Wells, Jennifer	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.8	5.0	4.9	48
Woodman, Jonathan	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	17

Juror Survey Results 2020  
Retention Evaluation  
**Dickson, Leslie N.**

<b>Survey Category</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<b>Deficient (2)</b>	<b>Acceptable (3)</b>	<b>Good (4)</b>	<b>Excellent (5)</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
Impartiality / Fairness	4.8	0	0	1	10	69	80
Respectful / Courteous	4.9	0	0	1	9	70	80
Attentive During Proceedings	4.8	0	0	3	8	69	80
Control Over Proceedings	4.7	0	1	2	15	62	80
Intelligence / Skill as a Judge	4.7	0	1	1	17	61	80
Overall Evaluation	4.8	0	0	3	13	64	80



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Judicial Council  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** July 15, 2020  
**RE:** Peremptory Challenges of Judges Eligible for Retention in 2020

---

### **I. Introduction**

In Alaska, a defendant has a right to a fair trial before an unbiased judge and the right to preempt a judge without proving bias or interest.<sup>1</sup> Two different authorities govern the challenge right. The legislature created the substantive right and defines its scope by statute.<sup>2</sup> The court regulates peremptory challenge procedures by court rules.<sup>3</sup> In general, each side in a case gets one peremptory challenge.<sup>4</sup>

This memo examines peremptory challenge records for judges who are eligible to stand for retention in November 2020. The tables display civil and criminal case challenges for each judge, by year. Because superior court judges' terms are six years, a six-year period is examined for them. Because district court judges' terms are four years, a four-year period is examined for them. Parties have no right to challenge an appellate judge, so those judges are not discussed.

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<sup>1</sup>See *Gieffels v. State*, 552 P.2d 661 (Alaska 1976).

<sup>2</sup>See *id.*; AS 22.20.020.

<sup>3</sup>See Alaska R. Crim. P. 25(d); Alaska R. Civ. P. 42(c).

<sup>4</sup>See *id.*

## **II. Context for evaluating peremptory challenge data**

Although the peremptory challenge provisions were designed to ensure each litigant's right to a hearing by a fair and impartial judge, in practice many factors prompt litigants or attorneys to challenge judges. Some parties might challenge a judge because they perceive the judge to be unfair in a certain type of case, while others might challenge a judge because they perceive the judge to be "too fair," and hope their case will be reassigned to a judge who they perceive as being more favorable to their case. Such a scenario can be especially relevant in smaller judicial districts and communities, where attorneys often can predict which other judge will receive the reassigned case. Other reasons parties might challenge judges include unfamiliarity with a new judge or seeking to avoid the demands of a judge who insists on high standards of practice or timeliness. Sometimes an attorney will use a peremptory challenge with the hope that a change of judge will result in additional time to prepare the case.

The Alaska Court System provides the Council with data regarding "disqualifications." The data are categorized into disqualifications brought in criminal cases by defense attorneys or prosecutors, those brought in civil cases by plaintiffs or defendants, and those initiated by the judges themselves. Judge-initiated disqualifications are discussed in a separate memorandum. Children's delinquency cases are included among criminal cases in this analysis because that is how they are accounted for in the court's case management system. Child in Need of Aid cases are included in the civil category.

Please note that in Child in Need of Aid cases, guardians ad litem and parents have the right to preempt the judge. These are noted as "other" on the following charts. Please also note that a CINA "case" that a judge may handle may include several consolidated cases because each child in a family is assigned a different case number. So if a judge receives a peremptory challenge in a consolidated CINA case, challenges are recorded for each individual child's case, magnifying the effect of challenges in CINA cases.

One system was used for compiling the disqualification data. Over the past fourteen years, the court has instituted a computerized case management system (CourtView) that has facilitated the collection and reporting of more detailed and accurate data for all court locations in the state. All of the CourtView data were compiled and reported by the Alaska Court System to the Alaska Judicial Council.

Care must be taken when comparing judges because they have different caseloads. Judges with higher-volume caseloads generally will have more peremptory challenges than those with lower-volume caseloads. Presiding judges sometimes ease one court's heavy caseload by assigning cases to judges from other venues within their judicial district, and to *pro tem* judges. Moreover, superior courts with heavy caseloads may ease their burden somewhat by assigning the bulk of a case to masters and/or magistrates. Similarly, district court judges may have very different caseloads. Cases may be handled by magistrates as well as by district court judges. The court system's caseload data do not reflect when a judge regularly travels to another community

to hear cases. Finally, consideration must be taken of judges who handle predominately criminal or predominately civil caseloads, as superior court judges in Anchorage do, versus those judges who handle all cases.

Parties who have not previously exercised their right of peremptory challenge may challenge a judge when one is newly assigned midstream, as if their case had been newly filed. Consequently, challenges often increase when a judge is assigned to a different caseload (e.g., from civil to criminal). Challenges also often occur when a new judge is appointed because those judges are newly assigned to existing cases and because that judge is “unknown” and thus less predictable. Another factor to consider is that some communities have only one or two assistant district attorneys or assistant public defenders. If an assistant DA or PD perceives a reason to categorically challenge a particular judge, that judge’s criminal peremptory challenge rate will be high, even though just one or two attorneys might be responsible for virtually all of that judge’s challenges. This may also occur in high-volume civil cases that involve only a few public attorneys, such as in Child in Need of Aid practice.

Care must also be taken when comparing judges across judicial districts. In 1995, the Anchorage Superior Court consolidated into civil and criminal divisions. Since then, all civil cases (including domestic relations, Child in Need of Aid, and domestic violence protective order cases) have been assigned equally to each of the Anchorage Superior Court judges in the civil division. Criminal division judges handle criminal and child delinquency cases, but do not routinely handle domestic cases. For this reason, it may be misleading to compare the peremptory challenges of a superior court judge in Anchorage with the rate of a superior court judge in another judicial district. Also, some judges in some judicial districts currently handle the therapeutic courts, such as Wellness Court. The impact of those caseloads on a judge’s challenge rate is unknown.

Because so many factors may potentially affect the number of peremptory challenges filed, these numbers should only be used as a signal of a potential issue with a judge. Once a high number of challenges is identified from the table, please refer to the explanatory text on the following pages which gives context for the judge’s caseload and potential factors which may have affected his or her challenge rates.

Blank spaces in the tables represent years that preceded the judge’s appointment to his or her current position. “Other” signifies a parent, or guardian ad litem in a Child in Need of Aid case.

### III. Peremptory Challenge Records - Superior Court Judges

Peremptory Challenges of Judges - Superior Court																	
Judicial District	Judge	Party	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		Summary		
			Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Total	Mean*	Median*
Second	DiBenedetto, Romano D	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	1	1	1	0	2	21	7	5
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	0	0	0	1	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	12	0	0	0	2	0			
	Roetman, Paul A	Defendant	0	1	1	3	0	9	0	5	0	0	0	0	32	5.3	5
		Plaintiff	0	0	3	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	3	0			
		Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0			
	Summary														53	5.9	5
Third	Crosby, Dani R	Defendant	.	.	0	0	5	0	3	0	1	0	3	0	28	5.6	6
		Plaintiff	.	.	3	0	4	0	5	0	0	0	3	0			
		Other	.	.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
	Guidi, Andrew	Defendant	6	0	2	0	2	0	6	1	9	0	31	1	157	26.2	21
		Plaintiff	7	0	11	0	14	0	23	0	16	0	22	0			
		Other	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0			
	Henderson, Jennifer S	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	0	3	0	0	0	28	9.3	10
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	0	3	0	4	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	8	0	0	0			
	Lamoureux, Yvonne	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	7	0	2	0	1	0	21	7	9
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	0	1	0	2	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	6	0	0	0			
	Miller, Gregory A	Defendant	7	0	3	0	8	1	4	1	11	0	13	0	106	17.7	18
		Plaintiff	4	0	0	0	10	1	9	0	10	0	7	7			
		Other	3	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0			
	Reigh, Christina L	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	0	1	2	0	9	3	2
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	0	0	0	0	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	0	0	0	0	0			
	Wells, Jennifer K	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	1	3	0	5	3	38	12.7	11
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	0	3	1	2	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	0	4	0	0	0			
	Woodman, Jonathan A	Defendant	.	.	.	.	1	0	1	1	2	3	6	6	37	9.2	8
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	0	0	1	0	3	0	8	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	0			
	Summary														424	12.8	10
Fourth	Peters, Nathaniel	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	22	1	5	3	6	37	12.3	9
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	0	0	0	0			
		Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	0	0	0	0			
All	Summary														514	11.4	9

. = No value

Defendant = defendant in both criminal and civil cases

\* Mean and median unit of analysis is judge/year

Plaintiff = plaintiff in civil cases and prosecutor in criminal cases

Other = Judge Disqualified for Cause; Peremptory Disqualification by Father/Mother/GAL/State

**Overall:** The average number of peremptory challenges for the superior court judges on the ballot for 2020 was 11.4 per year. The number of peremptory challenges averaged over the last five election cycles was 27.8 (2010-2018). Since 2006, average numbers of peremptory

challenges for judges eligible for retention have ranged from a low of 11.4 (2020) to a high of 36 (2006 and 2008). The peremptory challenge average was 14.4 in 2018.

**First Judicial District:** No judges are eligible for retention in the First Judicial District in 2020.

**Second Judicial District:** None of the superior court judges in the Second Judicial District received unusually high numbers of peremptory challenges. Judge DiBenedetto and Judge Roetman received low averages of 7 and 5.3, respectively.

**Third Judicial District:** None of the superior court judges in the Third Judicial District received unusually high numbers of peremptory challenges. Although the number of challenges Judge Guidi received was higher than that received by other judges in this particular group, the number was not unusual when compared to judges' averages over the last ten years.

**Fourth Judicial District:** None of the superior court judges in the Fourth Judicial District received unusually high numbers of peremptory challenges.



#### IV. Peremptory Challenge Records - District Court Judges

Peremptory Challenges of Judges - District Court													
Judicial District	Judge	Party	2016		2017		2018		2019		Summary		
			Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Total	Mean*	Median*
Third	Dickson, Leslie N	Defendant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	2.2	1.5
		Plaintiff	1	0	3	3	1	1	0	0			
	Franciosi, Michael J	Defendant	.	.	0	0	0	1	1	0	6	2	2
		Plaintiff	.	.	0	0	1	2	0	1			
	Hanley, J Patrick	Defendant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	1.8	1
		Plaintiff	0	5	0	1	0	1	0	0			
	Logue, Michael B	Defendant	.	.	.	.	0	0	0	0	9	4.5	4.5
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	0	2	1	6			
	McCrea, Kari L	Defendant	.	.	0	0	1	0	0	0	18	6	7
		Plaintiff	.	.	0	0	0	10	0	7			
	Wallace, David R	Defendant	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	1
		Plaintiff	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0			
	Washington, Pamela S	Defendant	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	2	6	6	6
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	1			
	Summary										59	2.8	2
Fourth	Christian, Matthew C	Defendant	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	19	4.8	3
		Plaintiff	0	12	0	5	0	0	0	0			
	Montgomery, William T	Defendant	.	.	.	.	0	4	0	3	7	3.5	3.5
		Plaintiff	.	.	.	.	0	0	0	0			
	Summary										26	4.3	3.5
All	Summary										85	3.1	2

. = No value

Defendant = defendant in both criminal and civil cases

\* Mean and median unit of analysis is judge/year

Plaintiff = plaintiff in civil cases and prosecutor in criminal cases

**Overall:** The mean number of peremptory challenges for a district court judge appearing on the ballot in 2020 was 3.1. This mean was much lower than in 2018 when the average was skewed upward largely due to one judge's numbers to 34.9.

**First Judicial District:** No district court judges in the First Judicial District are eligible for retention in 2020.

**Second Judicial District:** The Second Judicial District has no district court judges.

**Third Judicial District:** District court judges in the Third Judicial District received an average of 2.8 peremptory challenges per year. Judge Washington has no data from 2016 to 2018 because she served temporarily on the Anchorage Superior Court during that time. She received only six challenges during the year she served on the Anchorage District Court, the court to which she was appointed.

**Fourth Judicial District:** The two district court judges from the Fourth Judicial District eligible for retention received very few challenges. Judge Christian received an average of 4.8 challenges per year and Judge Montgomery received an average of 3.5 challenges per year.



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Judicial Council  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** July 15, 2020  
**RE:** Recusal Records of Judges Eligible for Retention in 2020

---

### **I. Introduction**

One tool that the Judicial Council uses for evaluating judges is a judge's record of self-disqualification from cases, or "recusals." Judges are required to disclose potential reasons for disqualification and then step down from cases when there is a conflict. If a judge's activities prevent him or her from sitting on an inordinate number of cases, however, that judge may not be as effective as other judges in handling his or her caseload. This memo examines recusal records of those judges who are eligible for retention in 2020.

### **II. Context for interpreting recusal data**

Alaska Statute 22.20.020 sets forth the matters in which a judge may not participate. Judges may not act in matters: when the judge is a party; when the judge is related to a party or an attorney; when the judge is a material witness; when the judge or a member of the judge's family has a direct financial interest; when one of the parties has recently been represented by the judge or the judge's former law firm; or when the judge for any reason feels that a fair and impartial decision cannot be given. Judicial officers must disclose any reason for possible disqualification at the beginning of a matter.

Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 3E presents even broader bases for recusal. The canon states that a judge is disqualified whenever the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned. The rule also requires a judge to disclose on the record any information that the parties or their lawyers might consider relevant to the question of disqualification, even if the judge believes there is no real basis for disqualification. The canon provides examples, including instances when the judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or an attorney, the judge has personal knowledge of the disputed facts, the judge or the judge's former law partner served as a lawyer in the matter in controversy, or when the judge knows that he or she, or the judge's spouse, parent, or child has an economic or other interest in the matter, or is likely to be a material witness in the proceeding.

Canon 4 requires judges to conduct their extra-judicial activities so as to comply with the requirements of the Code and so that the activities do not cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge, demean the judicial office, or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties. Canon 4 restricts a judge's activities so as to minimize the instances that would require disqualification.

Conflicts and resulting disqualifications are unavoidable. Judges must recuse themselves when conflicts arise. Recusals do not necessarily indicate that a judge has failed to sufficiently regulate his or her extra-judicial activities. Only very high disqualification rates should trigger an inquiry about whether a judge is comporting him or herself so as to perform his or her judicial duties effectively.

The following tables list the number of instances each judge recused him or herself in the preceding six (for superior court judges) and four (for district court judges) years. Blank cells indicate that the judge had not yet been appointed to his or her current position.

### III. Recusal Records - Superior Court Judges

Judge Recusals - Superior Court																
Judicial District	Judge	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		Summary		
		Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Total	Mean*	Median*
Second	DiBenedetto, Romano D	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Roetman, Paul A	2	0	1	1	7	1	12	0	5	0	11	0	40	6.7	6.5
	Summary													40	4.4	2
Third	Crosby, Dani R	.	.	1	0	18	0	26	0	11	0	8	0	64	12.8	11
	Guidi, Andrew	6	0	3	0	11	0	6	0	6	0	3	0	35	5.8	6
	Henderson, Jennifer S	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	0	4	0	8	0	18	6	6
	Lamoureux, Yvonne	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	0	1	0	2	0	4	1.3	1
	Miller, Gregory A	6	0	8	0	6	0	5	3	3	0	2	0	33	5.5	6
	Reigh, Christina L	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	0	0	2	5	1.7	2
	Wells, Jennifer K	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	0	3	0	5	0	13	4.3	5
	Woodman, Jonathan A	.	.	.	.	3	1	1	1	5	0	6	3	20	5	4.5
	Summary													192	5.8	5
Fourth	Peters, Nathaniel	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	2	2	0	2	6	2	2
All	Summary													238	5.3	4

. = No value

\* Mean and median unit of analysis is judge/year

The recusal rates for superior court judges eligible for retention election in 2020 are unremarkable. The judge with the highest number of recusals (though still low) was Judge Crosby, who averaged 12.8 recusals per year. Most of these came in her first two years on the bench, with declining numbers afterwards. Judge Crosby had previously been in private practice in Anchorage, and her numbers likely reflect her previous activity as a practicing lawyer.

#### IV. Recusal Records - District Court Judges

Judge Recusals - District Court												
Judicial District	Judge	2016		2017		2018		2019		Summary		
		Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Total	Mean*	Median*
Third	Dickson, Leslie N	4	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	10	2.5	2
	Franciosi, Michael J	.	.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hanley, J Patrick	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.5	0.5
	Logue, Michael B	.	.	.	.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	McCrea, Kari L	.	.	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.3	0
	Wallace, David R	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2	0
	Washington, Pamela S	3	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	11	2.8	3
	Summary									25	1	0
Fourth	Christian, Matthew C	3	0	1	4	1	0	4	0	13	3.2	3.5
	Montgomery, William T	.	.	.	.	1	25	0	9	35	17.5	17.5
	Summary									48	8	4.5
All	Summary									73	2.4	1

. = No value

\* Mean and median unit of analysis is judge/year

District court judges typically recuse themselves infrequently. The recusal data for all district court judges standing for retention in 2020 was unremarkable.



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Judicial Council  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** August 7, 2020  
**RE:** Appellate Evaluation of Judges Eligible for Retention in 2020

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### **I. Introduction**

The Judicial Council staff has several ways of evaluating judges' performance. One way is to compare how each judge's decisions withstand appellate review.

The review process begins with a staff member, usually the staff attorney, reading every published appellate decision and every memorandum opinion and judgment released by the appellate courts. Staff first determines how many issues were on appeal and then decides whether the appellate court "affirmed" each of the trial judge's decisions on appeal. Decisions requiring reversal, remand or vacating of the trial court judge's ruling or judgment are not classified as "affirmed." Mooted issues and issues arising only upon appeal, which were not ruled on by the trial judge, are not taken into account. When the Alaska Supreme Court or Alaska Court of Appeals *clearly* overrules a prior statement of law upon which the trial court reasonably relied to decide an issue, that issue is not considered. These cases are very rare.

After deciding how many issues in a case were affirmed, the case is given a score. For instance, if two of ten issues are affirmed, the case is given a score of “20% affirmed.” This scoring system is different than the court system’s methodology, which notes only whether the case was affirmed, partly affirmed, reversed, remanded, vacated, or dismissed. Also, the court system tends to attribute the appeal to the last judge of record rather than determine which judge’s decisions were appealed. In this analysis, if a case includes more than one judge’s decisions, an attempt is made to determine which judge made which rulings and to assign affirmance scores appropriate with those decisions. If it is not possible to make that determination from the text of the case, the overall affirmance score for that case is assigned to each judge of record.

After the case has been scored, another staff member enters information about the case into a database. The data fields include case type,<sup>1</sup> judge, affirmance score, date of publication or release, opinion number, and trial case number.

Before a retention election, staff cross-checks the cases in its database to make sure the database is as complete as possible. Staff then analyzes each retention judge’s “civil,” “criminal,”<sup>2</sup> and overall (combined) affirmance rates. Staff also calculates civil, criminal, and overall affirmance rates for all the judges in the database for the retention period. Staff then compares affirmance rates for that year against affirmance rates for prior years. Cases that are included in the calculation of these rates are only those cases that have been decided in the current retention term, which is a six-year span for superior court judges and a four-year span for district court judges.

Several problems are inherent in this process. First, the division of an opinion into separate “issues” is sometimes highly subjective. Some opinions have only one or two clearly defined issues and are easy to categorize. Other opinions present many main issues and even more sub-issues. Deciding whether a topic should be treated as a “sub-issue” or an “issue” deserving separate analysis can be problematic and varies depending on the complexity of a given case. Generally, the analysis follows the court’s outlining of the case; if the court has given a sub-issue its own heading, the sub-issue will likely have its own affirmed/not affirmed decision.

Second, each issue is weighted equally, regardless of its effect on the case outcome, its legal importance, or the applicable standard of review. For instance, a critical constitutional law

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<sup>1</sup> Cases are classified as general civil, tort, child in need of aid (“CINA”), family law/domestic relations, administrative appeal, criminal, and juvenile delinquency. If a case has issues relating to more than one category, staff decides which category predominates.

<sup>2</sup> “Criminal” includes criminal, post-conviction relief, and juvenile delinquency cases. All other cases are classified as “civil.” Because the supreme court reviews administrative appeals independently of the superior court’s rulings, administrative appeals are not analyzed as part of the judge’s civil affirmance rate, although they are included in the database.

issue is weighted equally with a legally less important issue of whether a trial judge properly awarded attorney's fees. Issues that the appellate court reviews independently of the trial court's decision (*de novo* review) are weighted equally with issues that are reviewed under standards of review that defer to the trial court's discretion. The Judicial Council staff has considered ways to weigh each issue to reflect its significance but has decided not to implement a weighted analysis.

Third, appellate courts tend to affirm some types of cases more often than others. For example, criminal cases are affirmed at a higher rate than civil cases. Many criminal appeals involve excessive sentence claims that are reviewed under a "clearly mistaken" standard of review that is very deferential to the trial court's action. Criminal appeals are more likely to include issues that have less merit than issues raised in civil appeals because, unlike most civil appeals, most criminal appeals are brought at public expense. The cost of raising an issue on appeal is therefore more of a factor in determining whether an issue is raised in a civil appeal than it is in a criminal appeal. Also, court-appointed counsel in a criminal appeal must abide by a defendant's constitutional right to appeal his or her conviction and sentence unless counsel files a brief in the appellate court explaining reasons why the appeal would be frivolous. This circumstance can result in the pursuit of issues in criminal cases that have a low probability of reversal on appeal. Accordingly, a judge's affirmance rate in criminal cases is almost always higher than that judge's affirmance rate in civil cases. Judges who hear a higher percentage of criminal cases tend to have higher overall affirmance rates than those who hear mostly civil cases. For this reason, staff breaks out each judge's criminal and civil appellate rates.

Fourth, the analysis of appellate affirmance rates does not include any cases appealed from the district court to the superior court. Those decisions are not published or otherwise easily reviewable. Staff has reviewed all published decisions from the Alaska Supreme Court and Alaska Court of Appeals and unpublished Memorandum Opinion and Judgments (MO&Js) from the Alaska Supreme Court and the Alaska Court of Appeals since 2002. These decisions are published on the Alaska Court System's website and elsewhere and are easily reviewable.

Fifth, administrative appeals pose a problem. Administrative decisions are appealed first to the superior court, which acts as an intermediate appellate court.<sup>3</sup> Those cases may then be appealed to the supreme court, which gives no deference to the superior court's decision and takes up the case *de novo*. Because the supreme court evaluates only the agency decision, and not the superior court judge's decision, there is little value to these cases as an indicator of a judge's performance and they can be misleading. We have excluded administrative appeals from this analysis for the past several retention cycles.

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<sup>3</sup> The Alaska Workers Compensation Appeals Commission hears appeals from Alaska Workers' Compensation Board decisions that were decided after November 7, 2005. Those cases may then be appealed to the Alaska Supreme Court. Because workers' compensation appeals are no longer reviewed by the superior court as an intermediate court of appeal, the supreme court decisions are no longer included in this database and are not included in the "administrative appeals" category.



Sixth, the present analysis involves only a relatively small number of cases for some judges. The fewer the number of cases in a sample, the less reliable the analysis is as an indicator of a judge's performance. Affirmance rates for judges having fewer than ten cases reviewed on appeal can be more misleading than helpful. For descriptive purposes, appellate review records are included for all judges, regardless of the number of cases reviewed. Affirmance rates based on fewer than ten cases, however, are not considered by staff as a reliable indicator of performance.

## **II. Analysis of Appellate Affirmance Rates**

### **A. Superior Court Judges, 2014 - 2019**

Generally, the trends of civil, criminal and overall affirmance rates have been stable since the Council began reviewing them in 1994. Criminal affirmance rates have ranged within eight percentage points, from 78% - 85%, over the past twenty-six years and have stayed around 81% - 82% most of that time. Civil affirmance rates mostly ranged within six percentage points, from 67% - 72%, until the 2010 - 2015 retention period, with one period (1996 - 2001) lower, at 61%. Over the past three retention cycles, the civil affirmance rate rose to 76%. Overall, the affirmance rate of all cases was stable at about 75% until the 2006 - 2011 period, when the rate began an upward climb to 78 - 79%, driven first by the rise in criminal affirmance rates, and then by the rise in civil affirmance rates.

<b>Affirmance Rates All Superior Court Judges</b>			
<b>Years</b>	<b>Criminal</b>	<b>Civil</b>	<b>Overall</b>
<b>1994-1999</b>	85%	67%	75%
<b>1996-2001</b>	81%	61%	75%
<b>1998-2003</b>	82%	67%	75%
<b>2000-2005</b>	80%	70%	76%
<b>2002-2007</b>	79%	70%	75%
<b>2004-2009</b>	78%	72%	75%
<b>2006-2011</b>	81%	72%	77%
<b>2008-2013</b>	82%	71%	77%
<b>2010-2015</b>	82%	75%	79%
<b>2012-2017</b>	81%	76%	79%
<b>2014-2019</b>	80%	76%	78%

Affirmance rates for superior court judges who are standing for retention in 2020 are summarized in the following table. The table shows the number of civil cases appealed during the judge's term, the percent of issues in those cases that were affirmed by the appellate court, the number of criminal cases appealed during the judge's term, the percent of issues in those

cases that were affirmed by the appellate court, and the combined civil and criminal appeals information. Comparisons of final column figures should be made carefully. As discussed above, judges with higher percentages of criminal appeals will generally have higher overall affirmance rates than those with a higher percentage of civil appeals. Comparisons between the first two columns are likely to be more meaningful. Also, judges having fewer than ten cases reviewed should not be compared with other judges. The figures for those judges are provided for descriptive purposes only.

To provide even more information for this evaluation, an overall affirmance rate has been calculated for all superior court judges, including judges not standing for retention, and retired or inactive judges, for the evaluation period. This comparison provides a better performance measure than comparing retention judges against each other.

<b>Judicial Affirmance Rates</b>						
<b>Superior Court Judges Eligible for Retention 2020</b>						
	Criminal Affirmance		Civil Affirmance		Overall	
	Number Reviewed	Rate	Number Reviewed	Rate	Number Reviewed	Rate
<b>Second Judicial District</b>						
DiBenedetto, Romano	1	0%	--	--	1	0%
Roetman, Paul A	7	64%	2	100%	9	72%
<b>Third Judicial District</b>						
Crosby, Dani	--	--	7	90%	7	90%
Guidi, Andrew	1	100%	31	77%	32	77%
Henderson, Jennifer	--	--	6	83%	6	83%
Lamoureux, Yvonne	--	--	1	100%	1	100%
Miller, Gregory	25	80%	23	86%	48	83%
Reigh, Christina	--	--	2	62%	2	62%
Wells, Jennifer	1	100%	3	83%	4	88%
Woodman, Jonathan	3	67%	7	62%	10	63%
<b>Fourth Judicial District</b>						
Peters, Nathaniel	1	100%	1	100%	2	100%
<b>Number and mean affirmance rates, superior court judges eligible for retention, 2014 - 2019</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Number and mean affirmance rates, all superior court judges 2014 - 2019</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>78%</b>

*Note: Data for judges having fewer than ten cases is provided for descriptive purposes only because too few cases are available for meaningful analysis.*

Statistically, the smaller the number of cases in a sample, the less reliable the conclusions drawn from that are likely to be. Samples of fewer than ten cases are likely to be misleading. Judges with fewer than ten cases are likely to be new judges without sufficient time for a case to go through all the steps of trial court and appeal court processes.

In the past, we have taken alternative steps to help the reader evaluate appellate court review of decisions by judges with fewer than ten cases. Most of the current cases were affirmed at 100%. To assist the reader, we describe individual cases that were not affirmed at 100%. Alaska Supreme Court cases are designated with simply a date: (2018); Alaska Court of Appeals cases are designated as a date and (Alaska App.).

For this retention cycle, eight of the eleven superior court judges eligible for retention had fewer than ten cases reviewed. With the exception of Judge Roetman, these judges were all newly appointed to the superior court. Some of these judges had previously been either magistrates or district court judges. Appeals concerning their work in those former positions was not considered in this aspect of the evaluation for their current position.

**Judge Romano DiBenedetto:** Judge DiBenedetto had one criminal case reviewed. It was affirmed at 0% (reversed):

*State of Alaska, Department of Public Safety v. Superior Court (Alaska App. 2018) (0%)* - In this case, Judge DiBenedetto ordered the Department of Public Safety to transport a defendant from one correctional facility to another for a psychological assessment by the defendant's expert. The Department petitioned for review, arguing that Judge DiBenedetto did not have authority to order the transport. The court of appeals agreed, explaining that while the court had authority to order transport to court proceedings, it did not generally have authority to order transport between two correctional facilities.

**Judge Paul Roetman:** Judge Roetman had nine appeals reviewed. Six were affirmed at 100%. One was affirmed at 50% and two were affirmed at 0% (reversed):

*State of Alaska v. Sheldon (Alaska App. 2018) (0%)* - The defendant, a convicted felon, was found in possession of a firearm and arrested. He also admitted to possessing child pornography. He entered a plea agreement to a misconduct involving weapons charge and judgment was entered. Seventeen months later, he was indicted on possession of child pornography charges. He moved to dismiss those charges, arguing that the state violated his right to a speedy trial. Judge Roetman agreed and dismissed the charges. The state appealed. The court of appeals agreed with the state that the two sets of charges did not arise from the same criminal episode and the time to trial on the pornography charges should be considered separately. It reinstated the charges and remanded for further proceedings.

*Olanna v. State of Alaska (Alaska App. 2019) (0%)* - In this case, the defendant was convicted of second-degree murder for strangling and killing his girlfriend. Judge Roetman imposed a sentence of 75 years with no suspended time. The defendant appealed. The court of appeals reviewed Judge Roetman's sentencing remarks and found that he had improperly considered the defendant's eligibility for discretionary parole when imposing sentence. It remanded the case for resentencing.

*Russell v. State of Alaska (2019) (50%)* - A jury convicted the defendant of manufacturing alcohol in a local option community. The defendant appealed, arguing that there was insufficient evidence. The court of appeals reviewed the record and concluded the evidence was sufficient to uphold the conviction based in eyewitness testimony of the manufacturing. The defendant also appealed his sentence. The court of appeals did not review his argument because it found the judge and parties made a

different error when they did not consider prior felonies that should have been taken into account when sentencing the defendant. It therefore remanded the case for resentencing.

**Judge Dani Crosby:** Judge Crosby had seven appeals. Six were affirmed at 100%. One family case was affirmed at 33%:

*Gray v. Gray (2019) (33%)* - This case involved a custody dispute. The father had successfully moved to modify a previous order allowing him only supervised visitation. The new order allowed increased visitation. He then moved to modify custody to shared physical custody. The mother cross-moved for an order requiring the father to pay unpaid childcare, tutoring, and healthcare expenses. Judge Crosby denied the father's motion for custody and ordered the father to pay the unpaid expenses. The judge also awarded the mother attorney's fees. The father appealed. The supreme court upheld the denial of the motion to modify custody but vacated the order to pay the expenses, remanding so Judge Crosby could interpret how a parenting agreement affected the payment of expenses. The court also vacated and remanded the attorney's fees order.

**Judge Jennifer Henderson:** Judge Henderson had six appeals considered. Five were affirmed at 100%. One, a family law case, was affirmed at 0% (reversed):

*Engeberg. Engeberg (2019) (0%)* - A father appealed a child support order, arguing that the judge should have imputed income to the mother because she was underemployed. The court reviewed the record and determined that the judge had not made factual findings on the record about the parties' incomes or the father's request for the judge to impute income. The supreme court therefore remanded the case back to the superior court for further proceedings.

**Judge Yvonne Lamoureux:** Judge Lamoureux had one case reviewed. It was affirmed at 100%.

**Judge Christina Reigh:** Judge Reigh had two cases reviewed. One was affirmed at 100%. The other, a family law case, was affirmed at 25%:

*Thompson v. Thompson (2019) (25%)* - In this case, Judge Reigh issued several orders regarding child custody, marital property division, child support, and attorney's fees. The ex-wife appealed. The supreme court upheld the custody order granting shared physical and legal custody. When it reviewed the child support order, however, it found that Judge Reigh had not made sufficient factual findings on the record that would allow it to review the order so it remanded that issue. The supreme court next reviewed the property division and concluded that Judge Reigh had abused her discretion when she considered the value of a fishing vessel separately and in the husband's favor, rather than together with the rest of the marital estate as marital property. The fishing vessel was acquired during the marriage and was not a gift or separate inheritance. The supreme court therefore reversed that aspect of the property division and remanded that issue. It also vacated the attorney's fees award stemming from the property division order.

**Judge Jennifer Wells:** Judge Wells had four cases reviewed. Three were affirmed at 100%. One was affirmed at 50%:

*In the Matter of the Estate of Alexina Rodman (2019) (50%)* - This case concerned an ex-husband's interest in his former spouse's estate. The parties had divorced but had maintained a

relationship and lived together until her death. The supreme court affirmed Judge Wells's ruling that the ex-husband had no property rights in the estate by virtue of their domestic relationship because Alaska Statutes do not provide for domestic partner intestate inheritance. However, the supreme court vacated Judge Wells's orders pertaining to some real property because Judge Wells had never issued final judgments on some of the petitioner's claims that the ex-wife had sold him some of the property.

**Judge Nathaniel Peters:** Judge Peters had two cases reviewed. Both were affirmed at 100%.

## **B. District Court Judges, 2016 - 2019**

The mean criminal affirmance rate for all district court judges from 2016 - 2019 was 74%, the lowest in the past twenty-two years. District court criminal case affirmance rates have ranged from 74% - 85%. Civil appellate affirmance rates for district court judges are not provided. They are not meaningful because no district court judge regularly has ten or more civil cases appealed to the supreme court.

<b>Criminal Affirmance Rates All District Court Judges</b>	
<b>Years</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>1998-2001</b>	81%
<b>2000-2003</b>	77%
<b>2002-2005</b>	77%
<b>2004-2007</b>	85%
<b>2006-2009</b>	84%
<b>2008-2011</b>	81%
<b>2010-2013</b>	79%
<b>2012-2015</b>	84%
<b>2014-2017</b>	79%
<b>2016-2019</b>	74%

District court judges' affirmance rates are summarized in the following table. The table shows the number of criminal cases appealed to the Alaska Court of Appeals and Alaska Supreme Court during the judge's term, and the percent of issues in those cases that were affirmed by the appellate court.

Judicial Affirmance Rates District Court Judges Eligible for Retention 2020		
	Criminal Affirmance	
	Number Reviewed	Rate
<b>Third Judicial District</b>		
Dickson, Leslie N	4	100%
Franciosi, Michael	--	--
Hanley, J Patrick	--	--
Logue, Michael	--	--
McCrea, Kari	--	--
Wallace, David	7	100%
Washington, Pamela S	5	40%
<b>Fourth Judicial District</b>		
Christian, Matthew	1	50%
Montgomery, Will	--	--
<b>Number and mean affirmance rates, district court judges eligible for retention, 2016 - 2019</b>	17	79%
<b>Number and mean affirmance rates, all district court judges, 2016 - 2019</b>	137	74%

*Note: Data is provided for descriptive purposes only because too few cases are available for meaningful analysis.*

As discussed above, judges having fewer than ten cases reviewed should not be compared with other judges. In the current retention period, no district court judge had more than ten cases. Five of the judges had no cases reviewed: Judge Michael Franciosi, Judge J. Patrick Hanley, Judge Michael Logue, Judge Kari McCrea, and Judge William Montgomery. To provide more context, the judges are discussed individually below.

**Judge Leslie Dickson:** Judge Dickson had four cases reviewed and was affirmed on all issues in every case.

**Judge David Wallace:** Judge Wallace had seven cases reviewed and was affirmed on all issues in every case, except for one minor correction to a judgment due to a clerical error.

**Judge Pamela Washington:** Judge Washington had five criminal cases reviewed. Two cases were affirmed at 100%. Three cases were affirmed at 0% (reversed):

*Prince v. State of Alaska, (Alaska App. 2016) (0%)* - The defendant was convicted of fourth degree assault. He appealed, arguing that the judge had prevented him from presenting a defense that his conduct involved “mutual combat” and thus qualified for the lesser offense of disorderly conduct. The court of appeals agreed, holding that the judge erred by not allowing testimony that the other person had touched the defendant’s granddaughter in a sexual manner several days before the day of the incident and had taunted the defendant to come over and do something about it.

*State of Alaska v. Borowski, (Alaska App. 2016) (0%)* - The defendant was convicted of second-degree harassment for posting a message on Assemblyman Dick Traini’s Facebook page that said, “Your going to get assassinated.”[sic] Judge Washington dismissed the charge, ruling that the defendant’s post was protected speech under the First Amendment. The court of appeals reversed, holding that the court

improperly made several findings of fact before it had heard evidence, and that the ruling was based on a mistaken legal premise that the defendant could not be prosecuted unless he seriously intended to harm Mr. Traini. The court of appeals explained that the correct standard was whether the communication would be viewed as a threat.

*State of Alaska v. Barber, (Alaska App. 2017) (0%)* - The defendant was convicted of possession of a controlled substance. He later applied for post-conviction relief, contending that the document charging him and the judgment contained the wrong statutory subsection for his crime. Judge Washington granted his application and the state appealed. The court of appeals reversed, holding that the factual basis of the crime (possession of two tablets of suboxone) was uncontested and the discrepancy was a clerical error that could be corrected as long as the defendant had not detrimentally relied on the error when making his plea. The court remanded for further proceedings.

**Judge Matthew Christian:** Judge Christian had one case reviewed since his appointment as a district court judge. It was affirmed at 50%:

*Kinmon v. State of Alaska (Alaska App. 2019) (50%)* - The defendant was a licensed game guide in Alaska and was licensed to sell big game tags in the field to nonresident hunters. He was convicted of five counts of tampering with a public record, five counts of committing or aiding the commission of a violation of a big game statute or regulation, and one count of failing to report a violation of a big game law. The defendant appealed. The court of appeals reversed four of the convictions and upheld the remaining seven. The court of appeals held that Judge Christian erred when he did not instruct the jury on a key element of the offense, leaving it for the jury to decide the definition of a legal term. The court then held that Judge Christian did not err when giving a jury instruction on the defendant's "mistake of law" defense. Although the instruction was not ideal, it was an accurate description of Alaska law and the defendant did not object or propose a different instruction.